

REMARKS

Claims 1-31 are pending. Claims 1 and 19-22 have been amended to address the objections raised by the Examiner.

Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-8, 10-11, 13, and 15-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Taguchi U.S. Patent No. 6,584,166 (hereinafter referred to as Taguchi). 35 U.S.C. 102(e) states in pertinent part that a person shall be entitled to a patent unless the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371 (c) of this title [35 USC §371(c)(1), (2), (4)] before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

Taguchi was filed with the United States Patent Office on March 28, 2002. Submitted herewith is a Declaration under 37 CFR 1.131 which establishes a reduction to practice of the claimed invention before March 28, 2002. Therefore, Taguchi does not qualify as prior art under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) and Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 9, 12, 14, and 20-29 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Taguchi. For the reasons stated above with respect to the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102(e), Taguchi does not qualify as prior art and therefore the applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Conclusion

It is believed that the foregoing amendments and remarks fully comply with the Office Action and that claims 1-31 are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested.

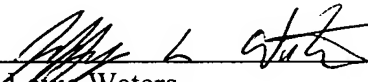
In the event the Examiner has any questions regarding this Amendment, Applicants' attorneys respectfully request the courtesy of a telephone conference.

In the event that there are any additional fees with respect to this Amendment, Applicants' attorneys respectfully request that such fees be withdrawn from Deposit Account No. 07-0845 maintained by Applicants' attorneys.

Respectfully submitted,

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